



United We Ride 2nd Anniversary

On February 24, 2004, President Bush signed the Executive Order on Human Service Transportation. That signaled the official beginning of the United We Ride (UWR) Program. In the past two years, the move toward coordinating human service transportation has become a 'hot topic' of national interest.

The UWR program has been embraced at the local, state and federal level. Eleven federal departments have worked together to conduct research, identify best practices, and share tools on coordinating human service transportation. States and communities across the nation have taken advantage of the tools and opportunities created by the UWR program. Many states, including Louisiana, have received planning grants to develop action plans to move coordination forward and enhance transportation services for people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with lower incomes.

In Louisiana, the planning grant was applied for and received in late 2004. A coordination committee was formed to develop an Action Plan for Louisiana. In November 2005, the Committee approved, and forwarded to the Governor, the *Louisiana Action Plan for Statewide Transportation Coordination*.

One of the major recommendations put forth by the Action Plan was the creation of a Governor's Office of Transportation Coordination.

The Action Plan identified four areas where specific action would promote coordination in Louisiana: 1) *data* was needed to identify coordination opportunities; 2) a *structure* would be necessary to bridge the various institutional impediments and insure that coordination efforts would transcend administrations; 3) *interaction* between various state, local and federal stakeholders was identified; and 4) the *resources* necessary to carry out the plan were identified.

One of the major recommendations put forth by the Action Plan was the creation of a Governor's Office of Transportation Coordination. This agency would provide a single focal point for all transportation coordination in the State. Louisiana has applied for an implementation grant; awards should be announced in April.

The Executive Order on Human Service Transportation set several national coordination initiatives in motion. The Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (IATCC) was created. The IATCC consists of the

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Public Transportation Staff

225-274-4302

**publictransportation@
dotd.louisiana.gov
www.dotd.louisiana.gov**

**Carol Cranshaw
Administrator**

**Donna Lavigne
Assistant Administrator**

**Harold Beck
Elderly & Disabled Program
Manager**

**Emily Callender-Efferson
Urban Program Manager/
Planner**

**Michelle Horne
Rural Public Transit Program
Manager**

**Wanda Walker
Training & Technical
Assistance Program Manager**

**Daria West
Discretionary Program
Manager**

**Michael P. Watts
Accountant**

**Vicki Brown
Elderly & Disabled Program
Assistant Manager**

**Sheila Robinson
Rural Public Transit Program
Assistant Manager**

**Kay Ryall
Safety & Other Programs
Assistant Manager**

Notes from the Top

Like most of Louisiana, the work here at DOTD seems to revolve around hurricanes. After Katrina, our staff began coordinating with displaced New Orleans RTA personnel, overburdened Baton Rouge CATS personnel, FEMA and FTA officials, and our counterparts in state government. After Rita, that job doubled. We spent most of our time providing information on resources and coordinating with state, local and federal officials. We are doing much the same job today.

Our DOTD Public Transportation staff knows more about the federal emergency hierarchy than anyone should hope to know. However, there have been successes. CATS and RTA are working closely to provide the additional transit services here in Baton Rouge and to restart services in New Orleans. There is a commuter service, LA Swift, operating between Baton Rouge and New Orleans 19 times per day. Connections to the LA Swift service are also being provided by the transit agencies in St. James, St. John, and Ascension parishes. Additionally, we are providing funds through a contract with FEMA/FTA to those transit agencies across Louisiana that are providing emergency transportation services to displaced persons.

While much of our focus is on hurricane related activities, there is some 'business as usual' news. DOTD accepted applications from our rural public transportation providers (Section 5311) and our elderly and disabled transportation providers (Section 5310) on February 1, 2006. An interagency task force is reviewing and scoring those applications.

There are several interesting developments related to the new national transportation bill. Section 3012(b) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) authorizes a pilot program allowing seven States to use, for operating costs, not more than 33% of the funds apportioned to them annually under Section 5310 in FY 2006-2009. Four of the seven states were named in SAFETEA-LU. Louisiana sent in a proposal in response to a notice inviting proposals from States and we were one of the additional three that were selected. We are developing special applications to accommodate this pilot project and agencies responding to our solicitation will be scored and processed in accordance with our State Management Plans.

We finally received FTA's FY 2006 apportionments and allocations. Formula funds totaled \$47,376,415 – almost \$6 million more than FY 05. Bus and Bus Facilities earmarks totaled \$12,129,367.

The Job Access/Reverse Commute Program is now under the formula funds and no longer earmarked.

The new program called New Freedom is under the formula funds and Louisiana will receive \$1,277,422 statewide to support the program. This Program provides capital and operating assistance to address the transportation needs of persons with disabilities that go beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Funds were apportioned based upon Louisiana's population of persons with disabilities. The grantees will be selected competitively and projects must be included in a locally-developed



Announcements

From the staff at
DOTD Public Transportation...

We hope that everyone had a

Happy  St. Patrick's Day

And we hope that you and your
family
have a



Safety & Security Workshops

DOTD will be hosting a series of workshops on Bus Safety & Security. The workshops will be held in Monroe, Alexandria and Baton Rouge on March 28, 29 and 30, 2006. The workshops will provide Rural Public Transportation (Section 5311) providers and Elderly and Disabled (Section 5310) providers with the latest information on Safety & Security issues. In addition, DOTD has developed templates for a Bus System Safety Plan and Bus System Security Plan that will be provided to each of the Section 5310 and 5311 providers once they are finalized after the completion and review of information received at the workshops.

Events Calendar

APTA Conferences

Joint International Light Rail
April 9-11, 2006 St. Louis, MO

International Bus Rodeo
April 29-May 3, 2006 Orange County, CA

Bus and Paratransit Conference
April 30-May 3, 2006 Orange County, CA

Rail Conference
June 11-14, 2006 New York, NY

Risk Management Seminar
June 18-21, 2006 San Diego, CA

For more information: www.apta.com

Other Upcoming Conferences/Training:

DOTD Public Transportation Workshops
Bus Safety & Security
March 28, 2006 Monroe, LA
March 29, 2006 Alexandria, LA
March 30, 2006 Baton Rouge, LA

2006 Texas Transit Association
April 21-25, 2006 Galveston, TX
<http://texastransit.org>

Community Transportation Association
of America's 2006 EXPO
June 3-9, 2006 Orlando, FL

For more information: www.ctaa.org

NTI Courses:

Managing the Cost of ADA Paratransit
Services
May 9-10, 2006 Kansas City, MO

Financial Planning in Transportation
April 4-6, 2006 Los Angeles, CA

Quality Assurance and Quality Control in
Transit Projects
April 5-6, 2006 Boston, MA

For information: www.ntionline.com

Transportation Safety Institute Classes

Courses are offered around the country on various topics throughout the year. For more information, please visit: www.tsi.dot.gov



Spotlight on...

The Challenge: Implementing the Emergency Transportation Plan

In the December 2005 edition of the Transitions Newsletter, the spotlight article featured the Louisiana State-wide Supplemental Emergency Public Transportation Plan (see "Emergency Transportation Services for Hurricane Evacuees" on Page 4). In that article, the plan and its approval were announced with much fanfare. Implementation, however, has taken on a life of its' own.


Once the Plan was approved in December 2005, FEMA turned the whole project over to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for contracting and management... what a ride. The contract and payment negotiations were completed in a record breaking two months. However, qualifying trips are being included from January 19, 2006 forward. The original Plan discontinued service as of the end of February but FEMA has approved an extension of the Plan until the end of June 2006.

Contracts are now in place between DOTD and the various participating providers. This task WAS performed in record-breaking time. DOTD identified 23 rural transportation providers and four (4) elderly and disabled transportation providers that would participate and are covering service requests in 28 parishes. In addition, six (6) urban transportation providers are participating and providing service under the contract in their areas.

The final contract between FTA and DOTD provides service from January 19 to June 30, 2006. There is \$19 million available and participating transit providers are being reimbursed on a per ride basis.

Also covered under this contract are several feeder service providers for the new LA Swift commuter service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. LA Swift runs 19 times per day on weekdays and 12 on Saturdays and Sundays. LA Swift provides rides to people needing transportation to New Orleans. The feeder service providers covered under the Supplemental Plan include the Ascension Parish Public Transit System, St. James Parish Public Transit System, and St. John the Baptist Parish Public Transit System.

Of course CATS is providing feeder service to LA Swift at its origins in Baton Rouge. On the other end, Jefferson Transit and RTA are providing connections and transportation to final destinations for the LA Swift riders. Each of the three new feeder service providers are transporting riders from throughout their parishes to pickup locations along the LA Swift route.

Emergency transportation is a new adventure in Louisiana... but one that is being executed with determination and creativity by all players. 

One of the DOTD Public Transportation (PT) Section's mandates is to provide information and technical assistance to transit providers in Louisiana to assist them in meeting their requirements for FTA funding. These activities come in many different formats and venues. DOTD provides numerous training courses, workshops, site visits, and training material as well as a web site and annual conference. To keep all of our constituents up to date on DOTD's activities, this section features just a few selected items each quarter.



Emergency Transportation Services

For the past six months, DOTD has been constantly engaged in coordination efforts to provide public transportation services to the displaced persons throughout Louisiana. The staff has spent countless hours working with transit agencies across the state, state government officials, FEMA and FTA officials. DOTD PT staff's primary function during this time has been to coordinate resources and secure funds to provide services to displaced persons.

Rural and E&D Applications

DOTD Public Transportation accepted applications from all of the rural public transportation providers (Section 5311) and the elderly and disabled (Section 5310) providers across the state on February 1, 2006. Those applications have been processed and are currently being reviewed and scored. Announcements will follow shortly.

Bus Safety & Security

As part of their on-going educational efforts, DOTD is sponsoring a series of workshops on Bus Safety & Security. The workshops will be held in Monroe, Alexandria, and Baton Rouge. Once completed, the comments gathered at the workshops will be used to finalize templates for a Bus System Safety Plan and a Bus System Security Plan. The templates will be provided to the rural public transportation providers and the elderly and disabled transportation providers in the state. 🇺🇸

Shreveport Goes Green

The First Diesel-Electric Hybrid Fuel Bus in the State of Louisiana was delivered to SporTran in Shreveport in March 2005 and went into operation soon after. It was purchased with a combination of funds from Environmental Quality grants, the Federal Transit Administration, and the City of Shreveport. SporTran is operating the \$517,000 bus in a demonstration program to see how it operates in real working conditions. The GM Hybrid drive vehicle is touted to get 25 percent better fuel economy, runs quieter, and has almost no emissions.

After nearly a year in operation, SporTran has run into some technical difficulties, but none that are not manageable. The main difficulty is related to the height of the new bus; it is 18 inches taller than the other buses operating in the city. The extra height has limited the number of routes the bus can operate on until more live oak tree limb trimming can be accomplished along other routes.



SporTran's Hybrid Bus

The hybrid bus was well received by the public. Operation is quieter than its standard counterparts and SporTran says that the fuel efficiency is between 20 and 25 percent better than standard diesel busses. While the cost is nearly double that of a standard bus, the fuel savings may make up the difference spent in local match and would be especially beneficial in areas with air quality concerns. 🇺🇸

Hurricane Rita... The Other Storm

Turn on the news and chances are you will hear something about Hurricane Katrina. Sometimes you hear about Katrina/Rita, but very seldom is there any real talk centered only on Hurricane Rita. True, Katrina's legacy in the New Orleans and surrounding areas will endure for generations. However, the other storm's legacy will endure also, at least in Southwest Louisiana.

Thousands of homes in Calcasieu Parish were left uninhabitable; businesses left with closed doors. A vacant apartment or hotel room is still on the endangered species list. Cameron Parish was literally devastated.

However, the citizens and officials in Calcasieu and Cameron took the hard-learned lessons taught by Katrina to heart. Evacuations were ordered early. Transportation disadvantage citizens were identified and evacuated. Law enforcement was stringent.

Calcasieu Parish

In Calcasieu Parish, emergency transportation services started long before Hurricane Rita prompted an evacuation. Thousands of Katrina evacuees found their way to the Lake Charles area before and after Katrina devastated the New Orleans area. The Lake Charles Civic Center was filled to capacity and evacuees were also being housed in the Burton Coliseum south of town.

The Katrina evacuees had transportation needs. The Lake Charles Transit System and

the Red Cross assessed evacuee needs and developed a deviation of the existing fixed routes. Evacuees were provided with wristbands that gave them free access to the transit system. The route deviations insured that they could get to and from shelters, medical services, employment services, and shopping.

However, when Hurricane Rita turned toward Lake Charles, the officials in Calcasieu Parish had a double evacuation on their hands. A plan was in place for evacuating the citizens of Calcasieu, but there were the Katrina evacuees to consider.

Federally chartered buses were brought in to evacuate the Katrina evacuees; but they had to board at the Civic Center. Lake

Charles Transit knew they did not have the rolling stock necessary to do everything... enter the Calcasieu Parish Schools and the Lake Charles Fire Department. The School System dismissed classes and made all school buses available to the Lake Charles Transit System. The City gathered all available city firemen and gave them each a bus. Those buses, along with the Transit System buses, patrolled the city picking up anyone, Hurricane Katrina evacuees or Calcasieu Parish residents, who needed a way out of the Parish and delivered them to the Civic Center for transport to Shreveport, Alexandria or De-Ridder.

Area Hospitals and nursing homes were contacted and rides were provided. Most hospitals began transporting their patients to the



Hybernian Tower in Lake Charles

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Civic Center for transport out of the area. In addition, a C-130 was flown in by the U.S. Military to transport hospital and nursing home patients to Shreveport.

Everyone in Calcasieu Parish that wanted to leave was evacuated. Lake Charles Transit says that over 8,000 residents were evacuated. This number does not include the Katrina evacuees that were transported out of Calcasieu Parish.

Today, the Lake Charles Transit System is struggling to provide services to an area whose way of life has been completely disrupted. In addition to the regular services, the System is adjusting routes and meeting the demand for the ever-increasing number of temporary housing units being established by FEMA in Calcasieu Parish.

Cameron Parish

In Cameron Parish, the Cameron Parish Public Transit System, operated by the Cameron Council on Aging played a vital role before and after Hurricane Rita. They worked in concert with local civil defense personnel and the Sheriffs Department to identify those citizens that were transportation disadvantaged.



House in Cameron Parish

The transit agency evacuated the local hospital and the swing bed nursing facility. Elderly



Old Dollar Store in Cameron Parish

ly citizens and Head Start families were evacuated to higher ground. They also made circuits throughout Cameron Parish searching for others that needed transportation out before the storm hit.

Once Rita made landfall and it was safe (relatively speaking) to return to the area, the Transit Agency was back in Cameron Parish. They manned a mass distribution center in the Grand Lake area from October 1 to December 31, 2005. The public transit vans were on the road delivering folks to FEMA centers, health clinics, and grocery stores in other areas. They transported people from all over the state back to Cameron Parish to begin the cleanup and rebuilding process.

The Cameron transit agency continues to secure volunteers and donated goods and services for the 6,000 Cameron Parish evacuees. March 24th was the six-month mark and the Cameron agency continues to transport temporarily dislocated Parish citizens to assist in the rebuilding efforts. The workweek has expanded to include weekends and demand on the system is at its peak.

Current pictures of Cameron Parish show little real progress in the recovery effort. However, the agency and citizens remain hopeful and committed to the area. 🇺🇸

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Secretaries of Transportation, Health and Human Service, Education, Labor, Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, and the Interior, the Attorney General, and the Commissioner of Social Security (and other federal officials as the Chairperson may designate).

Unlike many previous coordination efforts, the Federal government is casting a wide net and tying resources to performance.

One of the IATCC's directives is to promote interagency cooperation and minimize duplications and overlap of Federal programs. The group was also tasked with developing a report to the President within one year that would identify actions that could be taken at the Federal level to simplify and expedite coordination efforts. The resulting report, Report to the President: Human Service Transportation Coordination, was published in early 2005 and contains a wealth of recommendations.

Transportation coordination also received a huge boost from the recently enacted national transportation bill: Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The SAFETEA-LU, signed into law on August 10, 2005, was rife with coordination language. Several of the existing transit programs and all of the newly created programs require some type of local coordination effort.

Unlike many previous coordination efforts, the Federal government is casting a wide net and tying resources to performance. Louisiana has had marginal coordination successes in the past. The new Action Plan creates an opportunity to ride the coordination wave and provide more and better transportation services to the transportation disadvantaged in our State. 🇺🇸

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human services transportation coordinated plan beginning in FY 2007.

DOTD Public Transportation has a series of workshops on Bus Safety & Security scheduled for the end of March. Our on-call consultant, Alliance Transportation Group and their subconsultant, Transit Safety Consulting Services, will be providing training on developing a safety and a security plan for the rural and E&D providers. Standard plan formats have been developed and will be posted on our website once the workshops are completed and any changes are accomplished. We will also be developing a training video from these workshops that will be available in our library later in the year.

As all of you know, this was the third year in a row that our annual conference was impacted by hurricane season. In 2003, the Lafayette conference was terminated early due to Hurricane Lilly. In 2004, Hurricane Ivan postponed our conference from September until November. We are currently working on dates and place for the 2006 conference... more information coming soon. 🇺🇸



From Capital Hill...

In January 2006, the Transportation Secretary, Norman Mineta appointed Ms. Sandy Bushue as the Deputy Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration. Ms. Bushue was with Siemens USA. Also of note is President Bush's nomination of James Simpson as Administrator for the Federal Transit Administration. Mr. Simpson is the CEO of Victory Worldwide Transportation, a moving and storage company. Mr. Simpson sat on the New York city Metropolitan Transportation Authority board for 10 years. Mr. Simpson's confirmation hearings before the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee will begin soon. 🇺🇸